



**A VINDICATION**  
**OF**  
**French Evangelization**

**BY**  
**REV. THEODORE LAFLEUR.**



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# A VINDICATION OF FRENCH EVANGELIZATION.

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How may we justify our special work of Evangelization among Roman Catholics in this country? Is it on the ground of a belief that there is not or cannot be any real, true Christians and saints among the millions of adherents to that form of Christianity? In the minds of all fairly educated men, this is not an admissible question. Moreover, that cannot be the motive for the strong persevering efforts put forth, for the work and expense incurred in this Christian endeavour. That cannot be the ground to rest upon, because it is too narrow and too shifting. The man who believes, or says without having sifted his belief, that there are no true, devout, exemplary Christians in the Roman Catholic Church, has too narrow a mind, or too large a margin of ignorance to enable us to discuss this question with him. We will take it for granted that there are true, spiritual Christians in Roman Catholic Christendom.

Is that result due to the simple, direct teaching of Evangelical doctrines in that church at large? In other words: does the Church of Rome teach the Gospel of Jesus Christ purely and simply as the Apostles preached it after the death and the resurrection of their Master, and after Pentecost?

We all know she does not. She has the Gospel in her possession, she has even caused a number of versions to be made of it. It is embodied or implied in her theological curriculum, in the works recommended by the authorities of the church,

and the Popes, such as the Articles of the Council of Trent, in its catechisms large and small, of Thomas Aquinas and others.

But with her doctrine of development so ably presented by Möhler which, with her, means accretion from the outside, either Jewish or Pagan, or purely modern and imaginary, she has incurred, and that most deservedly, the terrible rebuke of Jesus to the Jews of old: "Ye make the Word of God of none effect by your traditions." The Word of God, the Gospel of Jesus Christ, has been drowned in the flood of her innumerable traditions and additions, and it is now for the minds of most of her adherents imbedded in the subsoil of her ever increasing dogmas. The few spiritual souls the church contains who are eager for evangelical truth, have to dig for it so as to find it there; men like Pascal, Fénelon, and Massillon of other days, like Gratry, Madame Swetchine, Lacordaire, later on, and rare individuals in our day, succeed in finding it buried in a mass of superstitious rubbish; while the masses resort to empty forms of worship or crowd around healing shrines or relics, and the every day more invading devotion to the Virgin Mary. The educated portion of that Christianity attempt, by real intellectual "tours de force" to reconcile some of the irrational teachings and some of the superstitious practices of that Church with the ideas of our modern general culture. They say: Only the poor, ignorant people believe such things. But those things are taught by the priests who are not reckoned among ignorant men. If you will take the trouble to look over the catalogue of books issued by our French Catholic bookstores, you will see there an almost incredible mass of incredibly silly, superstitious writings, in perfectly pure, and sometimes beautiful language. That implies some intellectual culture. Educated minds in the Roman Catholic Church strive very hard, and have always done so from Bossuet down to Newman, to entrap you in what they call the only logical issue, viz.: the dogma of the authority of the Church. If you can swallow that, it is a pretty large lump, then the whole will go very easily. You will then accept the confessional, which

implies that you do not really believe in the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples to say directly to the Heavenly Father: "Pardon us our sins." The auricular, obligatory, secret confession which is a snare to the confessor and a moral degradation to the confessed, especially the young women, has no footing on Gospel ground. You must accept that enormous and most incredible thing, that by a few magical Latin words pronounced by a man, a very ordinary man sometimes, Jesus Christ, your ascended Lord, comes down to be imprisoned, body, soul, and divinity, in a little wafer, that millions of people adore.

In the summer of 1893, on Corpus Christi Day, the weather was so unpropitious that the usual procession of parading the host could not take place. The parish priest of Notre Dame, l'Abbe M. said to his thousands of hearers on that day, that the "bon Dieu" could not go out—and that it was due to the impious "Presse" newspapers who had maligned the clergy—that was on the occasion of the most scandalous conduct of one of the priests. We then humorously, but sadly, remarked in the "Aurore," that the God that could not go out on that day, was the little, dead God fabricated by the priest, and carried out by him in good weather, very different from the great God by whom we live and whom we adore as the Creator of the Universe, the living, almighty, eternal God.

You must believe among hundreds of other such things what appears as announced in the newspapers the other day in this city: "Next Sunday, being the anniversary of the fete of the immaculate conception, there will be on exhibition for public veneration, in the Church of Notre Dame de Bon Secours, the very precious relic of a portion of the hair of the Holy Virgin, it is exhibited at 3.30 p.m. There is a supernatural virtue attached to this holy relic."

Think of a Gibbons, a Newman, or a Bossuet believing this! They do not believe it; never did and never can; they admit it as a part of the whole, with the feigned humble attitude that there are a great many things above our reason. That we admit with Pascal, but also with him we say: "Super non

contra." Above, yes, as high as the heavens, but never contrary to reason, and especially never below it as this is.

With the Gospel documents in our hands we proclaim our beliefs in a revelation from above, but we still continue to claim the exercise of all the reasoning power that the Almighty has endowed us with. Those very documents imply that we should. Christ and his apostles have appealed constantly to human understanding, while proclaiming truths that transcend reason. At the same time Jesus has rebuked foolish beliefs and superstitious practices. Did he not say: "He that has ears, let him hear?" "Can you not understand this parable?" When found fault with because he had not washed his hands before taking a meal, he rebuked the Pharisees by saying: "Hear and understand, that it is not what you eat that defileth you," but what you are in your hearts and minds. And to his disciples: "Are ye still without understanding?" That praying is not repeating words like the heathens. That it was not because a certain man's parents had sinned that he was born blind. Thus touching one of the deepest problems of our day. Did he not say: "Go ye and learn what that meaneth: I desire mercy and not sacrifice." Matt. ix., 13. In such words as these: "Take heed what ye hear. He that hath ears let him hear." Is there not in these words an appeal to the deepest powers of human understanding. Did not the apostle Paul say to the Christians of Colosse: "Let no one defraud you of your prize, in profession of humility and the worship of angels: intruding into things which he hath not seen, things that have a show of wisdom in humility." We have in these words a far seeing prophetic oracle. St. Paul in his pastoral letters has a good deal to say against superstitious teachings, and "old wives' fables" as unprofitable to piety. Who are they then who in the name of the religion of Jesus Christ and of his apostles, claim authority to lord it over others in holy things? Are they angels from some superior spheres? If only men like ourselves how come they to be so arrogant as to assume the monopoly of theological knowledge, science and the Holy Spirit of God? And, moreover, to force their

fellowmen to believe things absurd? No old woman has ever invented so many fables, has ever taught so many superstitious practices as the old Roman Catholic Church of this day and in this country. He boldly said, "Prove all things, hold fast that which is good." I. Thess. v., 19.

We feel perfectly justified in our attempts at destroying this overgrowth of weeds which prevents the good seed from having a fair chance of bringing a good crop. But, they say, this field is not yours, it is your neighbor's. I shall try to convince my neighbor that he will have a better harvest if he gets rid of his weed. And I don't think any reasonable person should find fault with this.

We all know that at one time Catholic Christendom had become so corrupt in its authority, in its teaching, in its practices, "In its head and members," that a reformation was absolutely necessary in order to save Christendom from a complete destruction. It came and at least a third of Christendom became reformed Christians, in the course of a few years amounting to sixty millions. This branching off became so vigorous and fruitful, that to-day it surpasses in numbers the old Roman Catholicity, the latter being a little less than two hundred millions, and Protestantism a little more than that figure.

Protestantism has, moreover, taken the lead in education and in the great movements of the world. At the outset it was the principal means of some reforms in the Roman Catholicity, which insured its continuance, in the midst of many changes, though professing to remain the same. In the days of its power both before and after the Reformation, she was a persecuting church for religious purposes. No writer of note denies that, only they say: Everybody persecuted then. That is true in a measure, but while Protestantism had in itself so imbibed the spirit of the Gospel from reading it habitually that it became less and less persecuting and finally proclaimed not only tolerance but complete religious liberty—the Roman Catholic Church, and I mean by that especially the hierarchy, has never yet done so, by any of its authorized



organs. It is true that Lord Leonard Calvert proclaimed religious liberty in founding Maryland, but surrounded as he was, he could not very well do otherwise.

The church cannot repent of it because it would destroy her infallibility, she has become a prisoner in the clasp of her own logic. She cannot profess to change, and in many respects she does not change; the world, other religious bodies alter her surroundings, change the mind and manner of life of many of her adherents, she still professes to remain the same, and certainly keeps up her old pretensions. Religious liberty she has never proclaimed, openly, clearly, to the whole world. More than this she never disowned or reprimanded her bold free lancers who from time to time have proclaimed in her name that she does not persecute now because she has not the power to do it, but that whenever she regains the ascendancy, inasmuch as she is alone in possession of absolute truth, she will feel bound to enforce that truth by all means at her command. Scores of writers, especially among Jesuits, have boldly taken that ground. The most prominent, perhaps, among the laity have been Joseph de Maistre, Louis Veuillot and Bronson. Those audacious or flippant champions have never been, that we know of, repudiated by the mother church who is always so merciful and tender to her wayward children who in some way or somewhere fight on her behalf. She always has a gracious absolution in reserve for the worst of the fighting pontifical Zouaves.

She, to this day, assumes this position in regard to her former territorial, secular, temporal power. We all know how but lately she was piece by piece bereft of that power, until Rome itself was entered by the armies of Victor Emmanuel, and he, not a Protestant prince but an adherent, a son of the Roman Catholic Church.

The Pope remained a self-constituted prisoner in the Vatican. But the old animal instinct of the mighty bird of prey, inherited from Gregory VII., Innocent III., and Julius II. remains with him; the old habit of political and ecclesiastical dominion clings to him, and makes him truly a prisoner. Old

as he is in years, and in supposed deep studies of religious subjects, he has not yet learned the nature of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ ; knows less of it than the poor pastor of any one of our evangelical churches. But quite lately he received a scathing rebuke and lesson on this very point from Signor Crispi, the Prime Minister of the Italian Government. I only quote a few words of his admirable discourse :—" They forget that a temporal prince cannot be a saint, a sinless mortal. Material weapons, violent legal measures may become legitimate as a state exigency, but they trouble the soul of a demi-god, take away all his prestige, stifle all sentiments of veneration for the Vicar of Christ on earth, placed here to preach the Gospel of peace and absolve the sons of Adam by prayer and pardon. Religion must not be a function of state ; as a temporal prince the Pope is diminished in his authority. Those who ignore this eternal divine law, are audaciously opposed to God—even when professing to be his ministers."

The old man of the Vatican has not abandoned this worldly claim. He mourns the loss of that power, and calls upon all his adherents, all over the world to maintain and advocate that claim ; instils that unchristian worldly spirit to all the members of the hierarchy, to the remotest priest of that organization.

Seeing this everywhere, and in this Province of Quebec, more glaringly than elsewhere, we feel perfectly justified in breaking that power as far as we can in the minds of our people by all lawful means, by the spread of sound and liberal education, by publications to counteract such publications as the last "*Pour la Patrie*," which is an absurd, coarse, vulgar, ill-written book, prophesying in most glowing terms the future glory and power of the French-Canadian Catholics of the Province of Quebec, and those of the New England States. It is on the line of Father Hamon's book, but very inferior in every way to the latter. It has been severely criticised by the French Liberal press of the country both as to matter and form, but the clergy are silent about it, because whatever influence it may have it is in their favor. Other books of this nature have been published in the interest of the hierarchy and its in-

stitutions, some of them by priests, and have also been demolished piecemeal by the same liberal press ; so that it is evident, as the case of the "Canada Revue" shows it, that there is no unity of opinion, of ecclesiastical and educational matters among the Roman Catholics of this country.

But there are much worse books than those published both in Montreal and elsewhere against Protestants, which English Protestants know nothing about, or if they do have some vague knowledge of them, they think it is of no consequence, and on this point they are greatly mistaken ; those represent Protestants as direct and unmitigated instruments and servants of the evil one. From the popular belief of a few years ago, cultivated among the ignorant, and never counteracted by the priests, that our colporteurs had cloven feet, which they had sometimes to make bare to prove the idiotic calumny, to the general accusations from the pulpits against Luther, Calvin and the other Reformers, we have the teaching of such little books as I hold here in my hand, "*Mes Tentations*," published and sold in Montreal and scattered far and near. This is so mendacious, so coarse and so vile, that I could not possibly, and decently translate numerous pages of its contents concerning the life and the practices of our great Reformers.

Who can reasonably find fault with our attempts at enlightening our people on such grave questions, or with our endeavors to dispel their prejudices, their wrong notions, to impart some of the knowledge we possess ? At the sight of these a mere patriot without any regard to results transcending this world would feel bound to impart some of his better knowledge to his neighbors. We have sometimes been told of having gone about to destroy the religion of the people and of putting nothing in its stead. In most cases there is nothing of that sort of thing to destroy, there is no real, vital religion, but only external forms, covering a completely empty sanctuary. If you do not succeed in placing the Gospel there, you have built nothing truly, nor have you destroyed anything worth keeping ; you have shown a fallacy. Could you possibly be wrong in destroying that illusion ? If the Gospel has been accepted you

have done what your Master did, and what his disciples did after him. They began their work among a people who professed to have the true religion from God himself. And they were religious in a certain way, but chiefly externally, putting the accent on the letter and the form, while Christ wanted them to cultivate the spirit of religion. And Jesus and his disciples evangelized them. But in doing so they disturbed them, and Christ acknowledges it : "I have come to send not peace, but the sword, to set a man at variance in his family." The apostles were qualified in Phillippi as "men who troubled the city exceedingly." Acts xvi. We could not possibly be found guilty of following such worthy exemplars. If after troubling you bring peace, heavenly peace in the soul, you have done like your Master. It may not be considered good form by many worldly people who go to church, and whose whole religion ends there.

But of what is really composed the unity of the Roman Catholic Church we are so accused of disturbing ? Is it a great reunion of souls in the love and service of the Lord ? Are those millions of adherents in peace between themselves ? We all know they are not. They are all divided in political parties, on questions of education ; some are more than ever bent upon keeping the people superstitious, of stultifying the masses with pilgrimages to shrines and relics, on cultivating monastic piety, while others among the laity work hard to emancipate them from that mediaeval religion, and get rid of the system of education which is a barrier to real culture.

On our part we are laboring to force more light and more air into that mass. You find fault for our ventilating it ! You say it is disintegrating That is precisely what we mean to do. We want to spiritualize that mass with the knowledge of the Gospel, we mean to break the spell which binds together what ought to be separated ; to make it for a time, if need be, as fragmentary as our Protestantism, as I am not afraid of the fragments being lost in space as long as we keep them in sight of our eternal centre, our Sun of Righteousness, Jesus Christ. Our Protestantism is infinitely more united in its glorious liv-

ing variety than that strange medley called Catholicism. It has given a remarkable proof of this in the great sittings of the Evangelical Alliance a few years ago and it is at least a dim prophecy of the great future union of kindred souls. For one, I am in no hurry to foster that untruthful, fictitious, childish unity of elements that can never assimilate, and can never form the union for which Christ prayed. He prayed that his disciples should be united. But he did not pray that worldly men and women, who happen to go to church, between their festivities and sinful lives should become a part of his church, before they are really of the family of God. One day as he was speaking to the people, he was disturbed by someone saying to him, "Thy mother and thy brethren are standing without desiring to speak to thee." "Who is my mother and who are my brethren? Whosoever shall do the will of my father who is in heaven, the same is my brother, sister and mother." Let us not forget the portentous saying. Because it means that wherever a human being is in communion with God, is doing his will, whether in church membership or not, out or in the synagogue, temple or church, he belongs to God's immortal family, and will be owned as such by the elder Brother.

Much as I desire a closer union of all real Christians, in view of manifesting the love of God in the world, and Christ's devotedness to the human family, the enlightenment and comfort of his holy spirit to afflicted souls, I have no sympathy for the weakly, superficial hankering after an external unity which would offset itself as a faint resemblance of the Roman Catholic conglomeration of ignorant, superstitious, infidel, immoral adherents with a few devout members among them. Nothing could be gained by such a reunion but the confirmation of an unchristian fallacy. It is all proper to pray "From all heresy and schism, Good Lord, deliver us," but if that prayer means "Lord forbid that our church organization should ever be disturbed, and broken up by higher and more spiritual truth and life than that we have," this prayer will not be answered on high, such dead prison moulds have often been broken up by the Spirit of God. There is something better than the uniformity

of doctrine, of form of worship and of church organization, there is life, spiritual life, everything should be sacrificed to secure it. There is something to be feared more than division, trouble and separation, and that is hypocrisy and sham in religion, against which Christ spoke so severely. Anything in religion is better than a mask, than saying Lord, Lord and all the time building for the soul's great future on unsafe foundations. Pascal and Fénelon may have remained in the so-called Catholic Church, by the side of Escobar the Jesuit casuist, and the atrocious persecutor of the Huguenots, Letellier, but the author of the Provincial Letters and the friend of the Portroyalists as well as the author of the Spiritual Letters and friend of the mystic Mad. Guyon did not belong to the same spiritual church. John Henry Newman may have become a sincere Romanist, and a poor acting Cardinal, but he never was a joyful believer ; harassed with doubts, scarcely honest in his inconsistencies, he took refuge in the arms of the Roman Church, failing to find the impossible church of his imaginings, still he never could be of the same church as the infamous Cardinal Dubois, of the time of the Regency in France. On the other side of the great shadow they cannot have awaked in the same "Kindly Light," in the same Paradise.

All our evangelical labors, all our preaching, all formation of churches, and theological schools are only considered by us as means to prepare individual souls for immortality with Christ in the heavenly mansions where the holy unity will be reached in its perfection. Our primary and most important preoccupation in this life is the salvation of individual souls; the cradle where they are born spiritually, and the religious home where they are reared and educated, though not quite indifferent, is not of paramount importance. Life, spiritual life, is the all important thing, as Christ hath taught. Indeed, one may have gained the whole world in forming a single church and lose his own soul in doing it.

In spite of all its pretensions we look upon the Roman Catholic hierarchy as one of the worst of all religious organizations for the culture of spiritual life among its members and in

the human family at large. It is too much mixed up in worldly affairs, and in political matters, to cultivate a purely spiritual religion. Partly from her long inheritance, and partly from the nature of her principles, she remains a worldly society with worldly ways of thought and actions. She is grasping as to property and wealth, though under the fallacious cover of professedly poor conventual and monastic institutions, charitable institutions of all kinds. She is casuistic, that is all impregnated with the spirit of Jesuitism, and unscrupulous as to the means provided the end in view is reached.

You are well aware how very lenient and charitable Unitarians have always been towards Catholicism. Intellectually cultivated as they are generally, it has always been a surprise to me that they seemed to know so little of the real nature of that religion among the masses. It is probably owing to the fact that they got their knowledge of it from books of the best authors who represented their religion under its most reasonable aspects.

Quite recently a Unitarian minister, the Rev, Brook Hereford, gave a series of lectures called "Dudleian Lectures," at Harvard College, on "Roman Catholicism in the United States." I wish I had space to make quotations from those remarkable utterances. Where the reality of Catholicism is finally grasped and shown forth. It shows the want of truthfulness in the system, its Jesuitic casuistics, its falsification of historical facts even in books studied as manuals in the public schools—and the claim of that Church not only as to general advice, but to absolute direction of the actions of Catholic citizens. The author says that there would be danger for the authority and safety of American institutions if all the laity of the Catholic Church were swayed by her clerical leaders. It is not so there, nor can it ever be with the education of the masses.

A quotation from James Freeman Clark :

"All the evils of the Roman Catholic Church have come from this source (the organization of the church being set above the religion of the church.) It has made conformity to

its ceremonies, submission to its authority, the essential thing. Hence its persecutions, its inquisitions, its resisting truth, its arrogant claims, its desire for wealth, its lust of power, its insatiate ambition."

But here in the Province of Quebec where they influence the great majority our position is difficult, our efforts as yet meet with but apparently small results. Not very large to be sure, but nevertheless real, substantial and increasingly full of promise. We do not deny that some good is done by devoted Sisters in hospitals and when needed heroically in times of war and other calamity, that some relief is given to poor humanity by the Little Sisters of the Poor ; but we deny most emphatically that their system is the best. The best system is that which *prevents* most effectively ignorance, poverty, vice and crime. Those colossal conventual institutions, and it is precisely here that Roman Catholicism has proved inefficient, increase the poverty they profess to cure, become surreptitiously rich themselves in some way. When they educate they inculcate a superficial education which prevents real culture of the mind ; they are an incubus in every country in which they thrive.

If the churches of the Reformation, in Germany, Holland, Switzerland, England and America, with all their general superior education, their liberty of thought, an open Bible, intellectual and moral culture, their hundreds of theological schools, the hundred thousands of educated, evangelical ministers and doctors of theology, and all sorts of appliances, such as Sunday-schools, religious libraries, they have not as yet succeeded in reaching the masses, more than they have done ; if they have as yet been unable to form completely pure memberships, entirely distinct from the world ; how, then, can you expect to find a pure Christianity in a church where in doctrines and practices there are so many compromises with poor weak and imperfect human nature as in this church ? My old distinguished professor, Edmond Scherer, has written on this point these words among many others of a similar import : " Protestantism is a protestation



against the 'accommodements' by which the world has little by little eluded the exigencies of the Gospel. The Reformers made strenuous efforts to bring Christianity back to the moral heroism of the Gospel. Catholicism is more accommodating and yields more easily to inconsistencies, with her Lent comes after Carnival, rites supply failures in conduct, absolution covers weaknesses."

Such loopholes and means of escape from the exigencies of the moral law and the spiritual standards of the Gospel have been laid bare by a Catholic saint like Blaise Pascal, and by a free thinker and scientist like Paul Bert. The doctrine of the Indulgences, the ordeal of the confessional, the devotion to the Virgin Mary, the rush to shrines and relics to be made whole morally and physically, reveal a mental malady so deeply seated that it will take ages to cure it, because childish minds will have first to be cured of the almost ineradicable belief in magical miraculous effect by the touch of outward venerated objects.

And there are men, good men too, among us, Christian men perhaps, who find fault with us for attempting to break down that system of deterioration. They must allow us to tell them that there are many educated men among us also, still nominally Roman Catholics, men mostly educated in Roman Catholic colleges or seminaries, who by the teaching of the priests and the exhibitions of those absurd and debasing practices have become not only free thinkers, but agnostics of the worst kind, and enemies of all revealed religion. Some with Voltarian hypocrisy learned in so called religious schools, work by word and pen to undermine the religious beliefs of their youth ; they have not the convictions to enable them to do it openly. Others with bold utterances and rough hands are demolishing the whole fabric, the false covering, showing that there is nothing under it, and they have nothing to put in the empty place. In this great crisis, having in our hands the writings of the Apostolic Church, the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the words of eternal life; and in our souls, we say it humbly, the witness of his gracious spirit, we are not going to remain silent, and if the empty sanctuary is not filled with the knowledge, and the

sense of the presence of the Father God "In whom we live and move and have our being," we mean that it shall not be our fault.

If in bearing our testimony we meet with opposition, if we are despised and ostracised, and insulted, if in this warfare swords are unsheathed, it will not be by our hands, we bear only the sword of the spirit, "which is the word of God," as St. Paul says. If we suffer we are sharing the fate of all reformers.

We have sometimes been told, "You are preaching in the wilderness." The comparison is not quite to the point. We are working on a moral and religious soil that has been badly tilled for centuries. It has been superficially ploughed, sowed over and over again with the same seed; the crop diminishing from year to year, until it is overrun with weeds, and in some places quite bare and sterile. Where we have been allowed to work it, we have ploughed deeper and deeper every season, we have drained and enriched the soil, we have thrown in the good seed of Gospel truth; and here and there we have patches, acres, fields of sturdy growth and fragrant spots. Little by little we extend the area of our field and we labour to make it as much as we can as the garden of the Lord. Would you, for the sake of uniformity, prefer to see this whole land a vast surface of the same stunted growth, and a general moral and spiritual dearth, as Spain and Arabia are?

We have also preached, taught and laboured in barren and desolate places, like the desert; but here and there we have found a neglected old well; we have cleaned it and deepened it. Elsewhere we have bored an artesian well, and the gushing waters from the bosom of the earth have allured the clouds of heaven to hover over them; we have formed an oasis there, and truly the desert, in the language of the prophet of old, "has rejoiced and blossomed like the rose."